

Destination: UK

Devon & Cornwall

The south west of England is a haven for those who love the great outdoors. Rolling waves, beautiful beaches, lush hills and quaint villages, coupled with fantastic weather give an enviable mix of vibrant culture and fascinating history. Here are just a few suggestions of things to do while you're in the area.



DEVON

Things to do & see

The history and heritage of Devon is as rich and varied as its landscapes. Traditions abound and some interesting characters are associated with the country as well as important historical finds. There is over 3,500 miles of footpath in Devon, plenty to occupy the Sunday afternoon stroller and the seasoned hiker alike. A variety of spectacular and picturesque long and short distance footpaths awaits you. Some have literary connections, others historic, but all have fascinating points of interest. The Two Moors Way is taxing, but rewards with wonderful contrasts of scenery, whilst the Two Castles Trail also offers a Victorian workhouse en route. The jewel in the crown is the South West Coast Path, Devon's only National Trail, with 205 miles of matchless coast. If you don't want to worry about carrying your belongings, try an organised walking holiday in Devon where your luggage is delivered to the next stop. The recently launched Drakes Trail offers a network of routes covering much of West Devon for walkers and cyclists alike. Nearly 150 miles of the National Cycle Route are in Devon including the scenic Tarka Trail and the splendid Coast to Coast – one for the truly fit! Designed to give visitors memories to treasure, you'll find these routes exciting yet safe for families and novice cyclists. There are plenty of places to hire a bike and activity centres offer guided cycling trips. If mountain bikes, steep hills, fun trails and muddy routes are your scene, there are plenty of places to satisfy, like Woodbury Common and Haldon Forest Park.

For something different, try Letterboxing – this strange-sounding activity, originating in Dartmoor, involves finding a series of small pots (the letterboxes) containing a stamp and visitors' book that is hidden on the moor. A clue is written to lead others to its position. Clues may be as simple as a map reference and list of compass bearings, or may be more cryptic. When a letterbox is found, the 'letterboxer'



uses the stamp to record the find in their own books or on a series of cards, and then mark the visitors' book in the box with their own personal stamps.

Inland, Kents Cavern, a Palaeolithic dwelling with spectacular rock formations which was the site for the discovery of some of the oldest human remains in northern Europe, offers beautiful and spectacular geological formations that will delight all members of the family. In North Devon, Clovelly, with its cobbled car-free streets and ancient harbour, stands relatively unchanged with careful upkeep retaining its natural charm.

Seaton Tramway is one of the most popular destinations in East Devon, and its appeal is easy to appreciate. The fleet of narrow gauge trains operate on a three mile line between Seaton, Colyford and Colyton, running through some glorious countryside and offering unrivalled views of the Axe estuary, over 50 species of bird have been spotted from the tram in one day. The popular open toppers provide a tremendous platform from which to view the lush surrounding. As well as enjoying the regular ride through the valley, the Tramway also offers regular special events such as bird watching trips and tram driving lessons, both of which are available to book throughout the year. Colyton town centre is a short ten minute walk from the Tramway. The winding streets, enticing shops and amiable pubs typify Colyton's unspoiled charm. Notable sights include the 12th Century St Andrews Church, with its unusual lantern tower.

Eating and drinking

Cockington Court Tea Rooms are set in a stunning location, on the outskirts of Torquay in Cockington, a quaint village. Located on the ground floor of the historic manor house, the tea rooms are set in beautiful surroundings. Enjoy a light lunch or try a traditional Devon cream tea whilst enjoying the views of Cockington Village. www.cockingtoncourt.org 22. Mill Street

Restaurant opens for lunch and dinner Tuesday to Saturday. The restaurant cooking, for want of a better term, is Modern European. It is based on fresh ingredients and sound technique. www.22millst.com. The Elephant is a two storey Michelin star restaurant, with a more informal brasserie on the ground floor and the Michelin-starred The Room on the first, overlooking beautiful Torquay harbour. At The Elephant, they offer a changing menu based around local and sustainable ingredients, using the abundance of fantastic produce on their doorstep, and have a great team who are passionate about serving great food. They work closely with Occombe Farm and Brixham fish market, which means they can deliver delicious fresh food all year round. www.elephantrestaurant.co.uk

Accommodation

Unique Home Stays offers luxury private house accommodation from castles to water mills, beachside havens to woodland hideaways, a unique selection of hand-picked B&Bs, amazing self-catered properties and stunning manor houses. They are utterly unique whether you want space for a luxury family holiday, a romantic coastal bohemian bolthole, or a beach-bound adventure. From intimate boutique cottage retreats perfect for two, to large luxury self-catering cottages perfect for a large family, each is located in unique and stunning locations riverside hideaways in the Devon and Cornwall area and further afield. Find all your options here www.uniquehomestays.com

Essential Contacts

www.visitdevon.co.uk

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CORNWALL

Things to do & see

The Cornish coast boasts over 300 beaches and is famed for its crashing waves that are fueled by the power of the Gulf winds that make it a surfers paradise. Knowing the right beach will be key to your trip to Cornwall. For swimming it's got to be Gorran Haven, Mevagissey. Haven means a place of shelter and at this beach on the south coast you'll find a safe sandy shoreline and a calm sea protected by the impressive 400 ft high Dodman Point Peninsula. For beach combing try Talland Bay, Looe, which was once a haunt of smugglers. The sand and shingle beach today reveals a treasure trove of colourful sea shells, pieces of glass polished by the waves and sea-sculpted driftwood. Try Gerrans Bay, Portscatho for Rock pooling. Check that the tide is out and discover the marine life. Try and spot red and green anemones, tiny crabs, sea slugs and darting fish like Cornish Suckers and long pipefish. There are 85 dog friendly beaches in Cornwall, one to be recommended is Sandymouth at Bude. Ride the waves at Fistral Beach in Newquay. Backed by sand dunes tufted with seagrass and washed by rolling waves, it's a surfer's hotspot renowned throughout the world. Whether you're a pro or a nervous beginner put on a wetsuit and grab a board.

The far west coast of Cornwall is home to all kinds of amazing animals and spectacular scenery, so get adventurous tracking down sharks off the south coast. Head down towards the Gulf Stream where Blue, Portbeagle and Thresher sharks prowl the seas.

Trees, flowers and plants love Cornwall. In the mild, humid climate they grow to be the best of their kind in the UK. In Cornwall's great gardens you can find record-breaking palm trees at Trebah Gardens, supersized magnolias at Enys Garden and smelly tropical giants at the Eden Project. Stand under an enormous Gunnera leaf in the rain at The Lost Gardens of Heligan near St Austell. Billed as the 'Sleeping Beauty' of horticulture, Heligan underwent its famous restoration after decades of neglect and now brims with a fantastic array of tropical flowers, trees and plants.

Eating and drinking

From well loved pastries and clotted cream to new Cornish food like air dried salami, Cornwall likes to combine the traditional with the contemporary. The Scarlet in Mawgan Porth combines mouthwatering local ingredients like St Ives beef and John Dory with the stylish decor and fantastic views to create a unique and unpretentious atmosphere. www.scarlethotel.co.uk A trip to Cornwall would be incomplete without some freshly made Cornish ice cream, so succumb to the mouthwatering flavours of Mr. B's Famously Fresh Ice Cream. www.mrbsicecream.co.uk Nestled beneath the steep slopes of Porthminster Point, right on the beach with unbeatable and uninterrupted views across St Ives Bay to Godrevy Lighthouse is Porthminster Cafe, an award winning seafood restaurant. The café specialises in Mediterranean and Asian seafood cuisine and is an oasis of taste and visual beauty. www.porthminstercafe.co.uk

Accommodation

Voted Cornwall's Hotel of the Year, Bedruthan Steps Hotel and Spa is one of the most family friendly hotels in Cornwall, with stunning ocean views across the Atlantic and breathtaking coastline. www.bedruthan.com. Set in 450 acres of stunning Cornish countryside, St Mellion offers a fresh, contemporary four star stay. They have three restaurants, the Elemis Spa and the stunning Jack Nicklaus Signature & Kernow Golf Courses available. www.st-mellion.co.uk. For something more low-key try the Boskerris boutique hotel in St Ives which has a relaxed Mediterranean style. www.boskerrishotel.co.uk

Essential Contacts

www.visitcornwall.com